

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 194602

FOLLOWING REPEAT BEIRUT 10330 SENT SECSTATE INFO ABU DHABI ALGIERS
AMMAN BAGHDAD CAIRO DAMASCUS DOHA JIDDA KHARTOUM KUWAIT LONDON
MANAMA MUSCAT PARIS RABAT SANA TEL AVIV TRIPOLI TUNIS DIA CIA
DATED AUGUST 13.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 10330

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PFOR, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON AFTER SIX WEEKS OF THE "SALVATION CABINET"

REF: (A) BEIRUT 8317; (B) BEIRUT 8335; (C) BEIRUT 8382;
(D) BEIRUT 9052; (E) BEIRUT 9571; (F) BEIRUT 9597

1. SUMMARY: IN POWER FOR SIX WEEKS, KARAME'S "SALVA-
TION CABINET" HAS MORE OR LESS SUCCESSFULLY MAINTAINED A
GOOD PUBLIC IMAGE, AND THIS POSTURE HAS NOT BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY
ERODED BY FREQUENT PUBLIC CRITICISMS FROM OPPOSITIONISTS
LIKE JUMBLATT. THE CABINET'S MOST URGENT TASK HAS BEEN TO
RESTORE SECURITY, AND IT HAS COPEd WITH THIS VOLATILE PROBLEM
AS WELL AS COULD BE EXPECTED. HOWEVER, AT ANY MOMENT A
SEEMINGLY MINOR INCIDENT COULD TOUCH OFF "ROUND FOUR." AND
THERE ARE THREE UNDERLYING ISSUES THAT REFUSE TO DISAPPEAR
AND HAVE YET TO BE EFFECTIVELY TACKLED: (A) SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR
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DEPRIVED GROUPS, (B) LEBANON'S SOVEREIGNTY VIS-A-VIS THE
FEDAYEEN, AND (C) THE DELICATE CONFESSIONAL BALANCE.

2. EMERGING FROM RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IS A PHENOMENON

THAT MAY BECOME INCREASINGLY SIGNIFICANT: THE REALIZATION BY BOTH CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS THAT THE MARONITE PRESIDENT, FRANGIE, HAS CEDED THE DRIVER'S SEAT IN POLICY MATTERS TO THE SUNNI PREMIER, KARAME. THE SUNNIS ARE PUSHING THEIR ADVANTAGE, WHILE CHRISTIANS EXPRESS ALARM OVER THE "PRECEDENT" THAT FRANGIE HAS INADVERTENTLY ESTABLISHED. ONE MAY QUESTION WHETHER FRANGIE, WHO IS SENSITIVE ABOUT PREROGATIVES, WILL TOLERATE HIS BACK-SEAT POSITION INDEFINITELY. HE MAY TRY TO REDRESS THE BALANCE THROUGH SOME HEEDLESS MOVE, THOUGH AT THE MOMENT FRANGIE'S NATURAL TENDENCIES IN THAT DIRECTION ARE HELD IN CHECK.

3. APART FROM HIS DOMESTIC POLICIES, KARAME'S MOST NOTEWORTHY EFFORT TO DATE HAS BEEN TO REINFORCE GOOD RELATIONS WITH SYRIA AND OTHER FRIENDLY ARAB STATES, SINCE THE ARAB CONNECTION IS VITAL TO LEBANON'S FATE, GOOD RESULTS IN THIS DOMAIN MAY GAIN VALUABLE TIME FOR KARAME'S INTERNAL STABILIZATION POLICIES.

4. NONE OF KARAME'S ACTIONS UP TO NOW HAS CONVINCED MANY LEBANESE THAT THE COUNTRY'S OUTLOOK IS GOOD. PESSIMISM IS RAMPANT. YET A "SILENT MAJORITY," HOPING THAT A MIRACLE WILL OCCUR, SUPPORTS THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO FIND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION. KARAME MAY PULL OFF THE MIRACLE, BUT IF HE CANNOT, LEBANON IS IN FOR A LONG HOT WINTER. END SUMMARY.

5. RASHID KARAME'S 6-MAN CABINET WAS FORMED JULY - AND, WHILE NOT RECEIVING THE PARLIAMENT'S CONFIDENCE UNTIL JULY 15, BEGAN TO EXERCISE AUTHORITY ALMOST AT ONCE. OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE KARAME GOVERNMENT AS OF MID-AUGUST IS GIVEN BELOW:

"THE SIX"

6. BEING AN EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT, KARAME'S "SIX" INTEND TO TRANSFER POWER AT SOME UNDISCLOSED TIME TO ANOTHER, PROBABLY LARGER, CABINET. NEANWHILE THEY HAVE MORE OR LESS SUCCESSFULLY MAINTAINED THE IMAGE OF MODERATION AND ENERGY ON WHICH CONFIDENTIAL

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THEY MUST DEPEND TO ACCOMPLISH THE TICKLISH JOB OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. AS EXPECTED, KARAME AND FORMER PRES CAMILLE CHAMOUN HAVE PROVED TO BE THE STARS OF THE TEAM, BUT GHASSAN TUENI IS GETTING MANY HEADLINES BY ENERGETICALLY TACKLING THE OIL PROBLEM AND HOUSING.

7. THE LACK OF ANY SEMBLANCE OF REPRESENTATION FOR THE POWERFUL DRUZE LEFTIST KAMAL JUMBLATT IS OFTEN SEEN AS A FAILING, BUT AN UNAVOIDABLE ONE AT THIS STAGE. TRUE TO FORM, HE HAS PEPPERED THE ATMOSPHERE WITH FREQUENT CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT. HIS ATTACKS ARE A STEADY FEATURE OF THE DAILY PRESS BUT HAVE FAILED TO EROD SIGNIFICANTLY THE GENERALLY GOOD PUBLIC IMAGE THAT THE GOVERNMENT ENJOYS.

SECURITY: KEEPING THE LID ON

8. KARAME'S MOST URGENT TASK HAS BEEN THE RESTORATION OF SECURITY. THE LAST SIX WEEKS WERE PUNCTUATED BY A SERIES OF MINI-CRISES THAT TEMPORARILY STIRRED UP TENSIONS, BUT NONE OF THESE GOT OUT OF HAND. ON JULY 23, FOR EXAMPLE, A TOBACCO VENDOR WAS ARRESTED IN SOUTH BEIRUT FOR SELLING CIGARETTES ILLEGALLY. SINCE HE HAPPENED TO BE A MEMBER OF A LEFTIST GROUP, THE RUMOR QUICKLY CIRCULATED THAT HE HAD BEEN "KIDNAPPED." (IT IS A FAIR QUESTION WHY THE POLICE PICKED ON HIM FOR THIS EXCEEDINGLY COMMON OFFENSE.) RIVAL GROUPS STARTED SHOOTING. HOWEVER, THE SECURITY FORCES QUICKLY INTERVENED AND THE MAN WAS SOON RELEASED. THIS ACTION QUIETED THINGS DOWN, ALTHOUGH PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN LAW AND ORDER SUFFERED ANOTHER SETBACK. THIS HAS BEEN THE PATTERN SO FAR, AND ONE MUST GIVE HIGH MARKS TO INTMIN CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND THE SECURITY FORCES FOR KEEPING THE LID ONE. QUICK POLICE REACTION, REASONABLY GOOD OFFICIAL LIAISON WITH THE FEDAYEEN AND THE PHALANGE, A PUBLIC INFORMATION POLICY DESIGNED TO SPIKE RUMORS AND CALM TEMPER, AND ABOVE ALL A GENERAL WILLINGNESS BY SECURITY FORCES TO HEAD OFF FIGHTS AT ALL COSTS ARE THE MAIN FEATURES OF CURRENT "SECURITY" STEPS.

9. BUT NOT MANY OBSERVERS BELIEVE THIS WILL LAST. AT ANY MOMENT A SEEMINGLY UNIMPORTANT INCIDENT--PERHAPS UNRELATED IN ORIGIN TO POLITICAL ISSUES--COULD SPREAD LIKE A PRAIRIE FIRE TO BECOME "ROUND FOUR." THIS IS PARTICULARLY LIKELY ONCE THE CONFIDENTIAL

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LEFTIST GROUPS AND THE PHALANGE REPLENISH THEIR ARSENALS. BOTH SIDES ARE IMPORTING WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION. THERE ARE DIRE PREDICTIONS FROM EACH CAMP OF RENEWED STRIFE IN SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER--STARTED, OF COURSE, BY "THEM".

10. THE ATMOSPHERE OF MUTUAL SUSPICION IS ALMOST THICK ENOUGH TO CUT WITH A KNIFE. IT DRIVES OTHERWISE PEACEFUL CITIZENS INTO SOMETHING OF A BARRICADE MENTALITY. WEAPONS ARE PRIZES AT CHURCH RAFFLES. LAW-ABIDING CITIZENS STAY HOME AT NIGHT. NORMALLY PEACEFUL PERSONS ARE VOLUNTEERING FOR CLANDESTINE MILITARY TRAINING. RUMORS ARE RAMPANT.

11. THE ATMOSPHERE IS POISONED BY EXTREMIST GROUPS HAVING LITTLE INTEREST IN A VIABLE LEBANESE REPUBLIC. THE FAR LEFT, THOUGH SPLINTERED, HOPES TO ESTABLISH A MARXIST STATE. TO THE PALESTINIAN "REJECTION FRONT" IT IS AXIOMATIC THAT ARAB REGIMES LIKE LEBANON'S MUST BE TOPPLED ON THE ROAD TO TOTAL VICTORY IN PALESTINE. SOME RADICAL GROUPS IN LEBANON WOULD RATHER SEE CIVIL WAR THAN CIVIL PEACE.

12. WORKING AGAINST THESE TENDENCIES IS LITTLE MORE THAN A GENERALIZED HOPE FOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION, COMBINED WITH

WIDESPREAD HORROR OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF CIVIL STRIFE. EVEN THE WARRING CAMPS SENSE THAT A "BALANCE OF TERROR EXISTS, EACH REALIZING THAT AN ALL-OUT BATTLE WOULD BE COSTLY AND WOULD PROBABLY SETTLE NOTHING. FORTUNATELY, THESE FEELINGS ARE NOURISHED BY POWERFUL FIGURES IN BOTH THE MOSLEM AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES. THROUGHOUT JULY AND EARLY AUGUST FREQUENT MEETINGS OF RELIGIOUS AND LAY LEADERS OF NEARLY ALL STRIPES WERE PUBLICLY REPORTED. THE RECONCILIATION THEME WAS STRESSED IN ALL THESE DIALOGUES. THE JULY 22 STATEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC PRELATES, PRAISED LATER BY THE SUNNI MUFTI (REF F), WAS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THIS SPIRIT, WHICH IS ONE OF KARAME'S FEW SOURCES OF STRENGTH.

UNDERLYING ISSUES

13. AS IF KARAME'S TASK WERE NOT ALREADY HARD ENOUGH, THERE ARE THREE ISSUES UNDERLYING THE CIVIL STRIFE FROM THE START WHICH REFUSE TO DISAPPEAR.

(A) SOCIAL JUSTICE: IT IS STRIKING HOW OFTEN LEBANESE
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POLITICIANS SAY THEY RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR SOCIAL REFORM. BUT EQUALLY STRIKING IS THE DERISION THAT MANY KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVERS HEAP ON GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. REFORM IS AMJOR FOCUS OF KARAME'S STRATEGY FOR RESTORING NATIONAL EQUILIBRIUM OVER THE LONG TERM. AS A FIRST STEP, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED A LARGE-SCALE PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECT (SEE REF E), SEEMINGLY AMBITIOUS. BUT OBSERVERS ARE QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT THIS SAME PLAN WAS DEBATED ABOUT 15 YEARS AGO AND NEVER IMPLEMENTED, A FACT THAT THE CABINET CONVENIENTLY IGNORES. EVEN THOUGH THE PLAN MAY DO MUCH GOOD IF IT PASSES THE POLITICAL HURDLES AHEAD OF IT, THE SPECTACLE OF THE GOVERNMENT RUMMAGING AROUND THE GRAVEYARD OF DISCARDED PROJECTS FOR ITS REFORM PROGRAM CAUSES MANY TO QUESTION THE WILLINGNESS OF THIS SOCIETY AS NOW ESTABLISHED TO REFORM ITSELF MEANINGFULLY. THE PIOUS NOD GIVEN TO REFORM, ONE SUSPECTS, IS A FACADE. POLITICIANS LIKE KARAME WHOSE CONCERN FOR SOCIAL WELFARE MAY BE REASONABLY SERIOUS SEE THEMSELVES STYMIED BY THE COMPLACENCY OF THEIR COLLEAGUES, AND SO THEY END UP PUSHING THE MOST READILY AVAILABLE PROPOSALS IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH A REFORMIST RECORD.

(B) LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY VS. THE FEDAYEE: AFTER BEING IN THE FOREFRONT OF "FIRST ROUND" LAST APRIL, THE ISSUE OF THE FEDAYEEN'S PROPER PLACE IN LEBANON CEDED PRIORITY IN THE SUBSEQUENT ROUNDS TO THE SOCIAL AND CONFESSIONAL QUESTIONS. THE PHALANGE EVENTUALLY SAW FIT TO REAFFIRM THAT IT FAVORED THE "RESISTANCE" LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE, AND THE MORE "MODERATE" FEDAYEEN REALIZED THAT THE LAST THING THEY NEEDED WAS TURMOIL IN LEBANON, WHICH AMONG OTHER THINGS HAS BEEN A MODEL OF THE INTERCOMMUNAL HARMONY WHICH THEY PROCLAIM FOR A FUTURE PALESTINE. THE FEDAYEEN AND THE PHALANGE ARE CUR-

RENTLY RESPECTING THE CEASEFIRE, AND ONE OF THE CABINET'S MAIN CONCERNS HAS BEEN TO KEEP THEM ON THIS PEACEFUL TRACK. HOWEVER, THE ANTAGONISM HAS NOT DIED AWAY. THIS IS AN EMOTIONAL ISSUE TO MANY CHRISTIANS; FOR THEM A SOVEREIGN LEBANON IS CRUCIAL. ESTABLISHMENT CHRISTIANS, PERHAPS UNCONSCIOUSLY, FIND IT MORALLY EASIER TO FACE THE "FOREIGN" PALESTINIAN MENACE THAN THE BREAD-AND-BUTTER CLAIMS OF THE UNDERPRIVILEGED MOSLEMS. AS FOR THE NON-CHRISTIAN SIDE, THE "REJECTION FRONT" IS ALWAYS ANXIOUS TO PROVE, WITH ITS MARXIST FRIENDS, THAT LEBANON AS IT EXISTS

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TODAY IS ON THE VERGE OF DISASTER.

(C) CONFESSIONAL BALANCE: EVERY CRISIS IN LEBANON BOILS DOWN SOONER OR LATER TO THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE CONFESSIONAL BALANCE UNDERLYING THE CONSTITUTION. BUILT ON THE OUTDATED PREMISE THAT THE CHRISTIANS OUTNUMBER THE MOSLEMS, IT IS A READY-MADE ISSUE. THIS CRISIS IS NO EXCEPTION. A DEBATE OVER THE "NATIONAL CHARTER" AND ITS CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM DIVISION IS STILL IN PROGRESS. THERE IS EVEN TALK THAT A "NEW CHARTER" IS UNDER DISCUSSION IN THE RECONCILIATION DIALOGUE NOTED ABOVE JOINING CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM LEADERS; BUT, IF TRUE, THIS MOVE FACES SERIOUS OPPOSITION. THE ISSUE SPLITS THE CABINET AND CONCEIVABLY COULD CAUSE THE FIRST MAJOR CONTROVERSY AMONG THE SIX MINISTERS. KARAME HAS COME OUT FOR A CHANGE IN THE CHARTER; CHAMOUN HAS SPOKEN PUBLICLY AGAINST A CHANGE. MOST PROMINENT SUNNI MOSLEMS SUPPORT KARAME, AS WHEN MUFTI HASSAN KHALED RECENTLY DENIED THE EXISTENCE OF THE CHARTER AS A SPECIFIC UNDERSTANDING AND CONCEDED ONLY THAT A FLEXIBLE SYSTEM HAD BEEN CREATED WHICH COULD EASILY BE ALTERED. CHRISTIANS NATURALLY DEFEND THE STATUS QUO, THOUGH SOME CONCEDE THE NEED FOR ADJUSTMENTS. INTERESTINGLY, SHIITE IMAM MUSA SADR HAS PUBLICLY COME OUT FOR KEEPING A CHRISTIAN PRESIDENT--A POSITION NO DOUBT REFLECTING HIS COMMUNITY'S OWN HANGUPS ABOUT THE SUNNIS. THE PROSPECT IS FOR CONTINUED DEBATE, BUT NO DRASTIC CHANGES IN THE ABSENCE OF A MAJOR UPHEAVAL. A MODIFICATION OF THE EXISTING MILITARY STRUCTURE IS BEING SOUGHT AS AN OFFSHOOT OF THIS PROBLEM (REF E).

THE ECLIPSE OF FRANGIE

14. EMERGING FROM THIS WELTER OF INTERLOCKED ISSUES IS A PHENOMENON THAT MAY BE INCREASINGLY SIGNIFICANT IN COMING MONTHS: THE REALIZATION BY BOTH CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS THAT THE MARONITE PRESIDENT, FRANGIE, HAS CEDED THE DRIVER'S SEAT IN POLICY MATTERS TO THE SUNNI PREMIER, KARAME. THE SUNNIS FORCED KARAME ON FRANGIE, WHOSE EARLIER CHOICES OF WEAK SUNNIS LED TO THE LAST GOVERNMENTAL CRISIS. SOME SUNNIS ARE FEELING THEIR OATS AFTER WINNING THIS TEST OF WILLS. STATEMENTS SUCH AS A RECENT ONE BY SAEB SALAAM THAT ALL

FUTURE PRIME MINISTERS SHOULD BE CHOSEN BY THE MOSLEM
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HIERARCHY AND PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT AS A FAIT ACCOMPLI
REASSURE NEITHER PRESIDENT NOR THE CHRISTIANS. SOME
CHRISTIANS, BLAMING FRANGIE, EXPRESS ALARM OVER THE
"PRECEDENT" THAT HE HAS INAVERTENTLY ESTABLISHED. THE
PRESIDENT DOES NOT HAVE ANY CHRISTIAN ADMIRERS THESE
DAYS. A SARCASTIC REMARK ATTRIBUTED TO CHAMOUN IS
TYPICAL: "WE CHOSE SULIEMAN FRANGIE SO THAT HE WOULD
USE HIS MUSCLE; UNFORTUNATELY, HE USED HIS HEAD INSTEAD."

15. ONE SHOULD NOT OVERDRAMATIZE FRANGIE'S DECLINE. IN
PART, IT IS A NATURAL LAME-DUCK PHENOMENON NEAR THE END OF
HIS TERM. HE STILL HOLDS THE PRESIDENTIAL REINS OF POWER
GIVEN HIM BY THE CONSTITUTION, AND THE TROIKA OF KARAME,
CHAMOUN, AND FRANGIE HAS EMERGED AS AN "INNER CABINET."
NEVERTHELESS THE MAN OF THE HOUR IN THIS NATIONAL CRISIS WAS
NOTFRANGIE BUT KARAME AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT, 75 YEAR OLD
CHAMOUN.

16. ONE MAY QUESTION WHETHER FRANGIE, A SENSITIVE AND
STUBBORN MAN, WILL TOLERATE THIS NEW POSITION. SOME FEAR
HE WILL AGAIN "USE HIS HEAD" AND TRY TO REASSERT HIS
AUTHORITY--PERHAPS ONCE KARAME BECOMES LESS POPULAR AF-
TER FAILING TO ACHIEVE ALL OR PART OF HIS "NATIONAL SALVATION"
PROGRAM. FRANGIE MAY TRY TO TORPEDO THE PROGRAM QUIETLY
IN ORDER TO HASTEN THIS PROCESS. THEN HE MAY ONCE AGAIN
SEEK TO NAME HIS OWN PRIME MINISTER, HEEDLESS OF THE CON-
SEQUENCES.

17. SEVERAL OTHER MORE DRASTIC OPTIONS ARE OPEN TO FRANGIE
CONSTITUTIONALLY. ONE IS TO DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT AND FORCE AN
EARLY ELECTION. MORE FREQUENTLY DISCUSSED IS AN OPPOSITE
MANEUVER, NAMELY POSTPONING THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION
ON GROUNDS OF PUBLIC INSECURITY BY MEANS OF A PRESIDENTIALLY-
SUPPORTED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDEMENT (REQUIRING APPROVAL BY
TWO-THIRDS OF THE PARLIAMENT) THAT WOULD LENGTHEN THE PARLIA-
MENT'S TERM. IT IS ARGUED THAT PARLIAMENT WOULD THEN BE
INCLINED TO "RETURN THE FAVOR" BY ELECTING FRANGIE'S CHOICE
FOR PRESIDENT NEXT SUMMER. ALTHOUGH THESE POSSIBILITIES
ARE OPENLY DISCUSSED IN BEIRUT, AS OF THE MOMENT WE DIS-
COUNT SUCH POLITICALLY EXPLOSIVE EVENTUALITIES.

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THE ARAB CONNECTION

18. KARAME'S PRESTIGE AS HEAD OF THE "SALVATION CABINET"
IS A PERISHABLE COMMODITY, AND HE MUST MOVE FAST TO RE-

STORE NATIONAL EQUILIBRIUM. APART FROM THE CHANCY SECURITY AND SOCIAL EFFORTS DESCRIBED ABOVE, HIS MAIN MOVE SO FAR HAS BEEN TO REINFORCE HIS RELATIONS THROUGH- OUT THE ARAB WORLD. HE KNOWS THAT LEBANON'S FATE DEPENDS ON THE ARAB CONTEXT, AND ESPECIALLY THAT LEBANESE INDEPENDENCE IS BEST SATISFIED BY A FRIENDLY SYRIAN BIG BROTHER NEXT DOOR.

19. A FAVORABLE CONJUNCTURE OF POLITICAL FORCES GAVE KARAME AN EARLY CHANCE TO MOVE TOWARD SYRIA. AT NO TIME IN THE THREE ROUNDS OF FIGHTING THIS YEAR WAS SERIOUS ISSUE MADE, EITHER IN- SIDE OR OUTSIDE LEBANON, OF LEBANESE INDEPENDENCE PER SE-- A BURING ISSUE IN PAST YEARS. MOREOVER, AN INDICATION OF SYRIAN GOODWILL WAS PROVIDED BY SYRIAN FONMIN KHADDAM'S HELPFUL ROLE IN SOLVING THE LATEST STRIFE. KARAME WAS THEREFORE ABLE TO TURN A ONE-DAY "PROTOCOL" VISIT TO DAMASCUS ON AUG 2 INTO AN OCCASION FOR WIDELY PUBLICIZED BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS. THE SYRIANS WERE RECEPTIVE FOR REASONS OF THEIR OWN, AND THE VISIT WAS MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL.

20. KARAME IS STARTING SIMILAR MOVES TOWARD OTHER FRIENDLY ARAB STATES, AS SHOWN BY GHASSAN TUENI'S RECENT VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA TO SETTLE PETROLEUM QUESTIONS. IF KARAME SUCCEEDS IN THESE EFFORTS AS WELL, HE MAY GAIN VITAL TIME.

OUTLOOK: THERE ARE VERY FEW OPTIMISTS

21. NOT MANY LEBANESE SEE THEIR WAY CLEAR TO A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS IN THE ABSENCE OF AN OVERALL NEAR EAST SETTLEMENT THAT HARDLY SEEMS JUST AROUND THE CORNER. MOREOVER, QUITE A FEW LEBANESE ARE DEMORALIZED BY THE BLOW INFLICTED ON THE ECONOMY IN RE- CURRENT ROUNDS OF FIGHTING. ONE GETS A PICTURE OF INCREASING FRUSTRATION.

22. BUT NEARLY ALL LEBANESE, FED UP WITH THE DAMAGE DURING THE FIGHTING, FERVENTLY HOPE THAT A MIRACLE WILL OCCUR. THEY FATALISTICALLY TRY TO LEAD AS NORMAL LIVES AS POSSIBLE IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CURRENT UNCERTAINTY. PARADOXICALLY, THEREFORE, THE UNI- VERSAL PESSIMISM MAY PROVE TO BE THE COUNTRYEJ S SALVUTION. TOGETHER WITH THE ABOVE-MENTIONED RECONCILIATION MOVEMENT VISIBLE AMONG RELIGIOUS AND LAY LEADERS--AN EFFORT WHICH THIS POPULAR DESPAIR REINFORCES--THE "SILENT MAJORITY" FOR A PEACEFUL SOLUTION IS ONE OF KARAME'S MAIN ASSETS. IF HE AND CHAMOUN CAN KEEP THE LID ON INCIDENTS, AND IF HE CAN DEMONSTRATE PROGRESS IN SOCIAL JUSTICE AT LEAST TO THE POINT WHERE OPPOSITIONISTS LIKE JUMBLATT FIND THEIR THUNDER STOLEN, HE MAY PULL OFF THE MIRACLE, IF NOT, LEBANON IS IN FOR A LONG HOT WINTER.

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